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**NATIONALISM AND CLASS CONFLICT  
IN CHINA  
(PROLOGUE)**

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In China, the idea that the relationship of Heaven-Sovereign-People would continue to preserve harmony in accordance with natural law was one that constituted an ancient and unchanged outlook on the world. Without disclaiming this tradition, it would not have been possible for nationalism to grow. China's increase was supported by agriculture. With the family as the unit of production, and depending upon an Asian-style agriculture which, throwing in family labour-power to the maximum limit, raises labour-intensity and demands constant care and attention (separation of farming and grazing made this type of agriculture inevitable) the family was, on the one hand, a patriarchy, and, on the other hand, a family production cooperative, and so represented a contradiction. Because the countryside was made up of families of this kind, the system of land-ownership and peasant cooperatives functioned at the same time, on the one hand, contributing to the stabilisation of political authority, and, on the other hand, forming a foundation for peasant insurrection. The dynasties reigned over the countryside by means of the power of the law, the officials and the soldiery. The land-owning autocratic side served in the countryside as the ultimate organs of the dynasty precisely because the land-owners counted on assistance from the government in order to keep the peasantry down. Normally, the rural landlords were responsible for the payment of taxes and for keeping the peace. But whenever taxation became overheavy, or it became impossible to maintain the peasants' livelihood because of natural calamities, the countryside came under the control of the peasant cooperative bodies, and not infrequently there were peasant uprisings that even overthrew the dynasty. Even natural calamities were the responsibility of the sovereign, for they were understood to indicate that Heaven had become angered at the sovereign's lack of virtue and was inflicting calamity from on high. Dynasty after dynasty was over-



thrown by peasant violence, for the most part, yet, because the peasants themselves by no means disclaimed the traditional world outlook, the result was that they sought the replacement of either the sovereign or officials, and in the end a new dynasty came into being. Though there may have been reform, revolution cannot be said to have resulted.

From the Ming Dynasty on, peasant groups came to be widely formed in the villages, exerting their power against the village government, and even beginning to show signs of attempting to seize the power of village leadership in one way or another. This was because retail commodity market having been brought under control, the peasantry had begun to fight against ground-rents in order to obtain the capital for multiple reproduction. During the Ch'ing Dynasty this tendency broadened, and manufacturing enterprises with silk-spinning and weaving at their centre were growing up. In all villages there were large or small markets, and the peasantry produced agricultural products for trade, improving their techniques and skills so as to turn a better profit. But on entering the 18th century, the parasitic-landlord-system seized control; both commercial capital and rural markets come under its management, and progress towards modernisation was blocked. In the cities and towns as well, feudalist handicrafts industry had developed with its foundations in the apprentice system, and there was also a lively struggle between the crafts guilds, but commercial capital gradually gained control of the handicrafts workshops, or came to own them, and the struggle of the artisans' guilds ended in defeat. After the 18th century, the guild merchants seized municipal government, and owned not only the municipal offices, but also the soldiery, and even came to constitute the courts of law. Thereupon there was no freedom for the citizens, and the autocracy of parasitic commercial capital alone was to be found. Guild cities there were, to be sure, but free cities could not be born. The Opium Wars were onslaughts which took advantage of this kind of feudal reaction. The Ch'ing Dynasty was easily beaten, and, through the Unequal Treaties, recognised the position of the Great Powers as that of a joint colonial government. To throw off their colonial status, the Chinese people started an antiimperialist movement, and at the same time

started to carry out an antiestablishment movement. It was inevitable that the Chinese nationalist movement should be linked to the class struggle, consisting, as it did, in opposition to the Ch'ing Dynasty with the feudal land-ownership and commercial capital at its back. This has been a common characteristic of the liberation movements in colonies and semi-colonies.

For Chinese nationalism, it was not simply a matter of opposing imperialism and opposing feudalism, but it was also essential to overthrow the traditional Chinese empire, and to wage a decisive struggle against Chinese thought and the corporate entity compounded of Asian-style agriculture and family patriarchy that formed the basis of that thought. And when it came to class struggle, it was not simply a matter of overthrowing the feudal landlords, but there remained the inescapable task of binding together into a nation a people scattered like grains of sand. The energy for the new union lay in the peasants and workers, but there had to be the intellectuals to arouse them, as well as an awakening of the bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie and soldiery.

From the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom until the recent Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, countless battles for liberation have been fought. It goes without saying that these have each had important significance and also given rise to problems. Here I should like to set forth the roles played by the Kuomintang and the Communist Party in the Sino-Japanese War as they were mirrored in the actual conditions of the popular masses. The period of the Sino-Japanese War was one which played a decisive part in shaping nationalism, so it is considered desirable to set forth in detail at this conference the process which led up to it and the transition that followed it.

#### 1. THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT'S REVOLUTIONARY WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

The Sino-Japanese War embroiled one-quarter of China's territory, half of its arable land, 80 per cent of its large cities, and 90 per cent of its factories. The Chinese people's sense of crisis became profound. It was a turning-point in Chinese history inasmuch as it aroused the popular masses to a racial consciousness and made them



arise, removed the internal and external obstacles preventing the development of nationalism, and made China emerge towards modern nationhood.

The Nationalist Government designated this war as a «Revolutionary War of Independence», and asserted that the War Resistance Against Japan meant carrying out the great task of national construction by a revolution based on the Three People's Principles, and completing the national revolution by making nationalism a reality. By proclaiming a Programme for the War of Resistance and National Reconstruction, opening a People's Consultative Conference, recognising the people's democratic rights (freedom of assembly, association and publication), and according legal status to all political parties, including the Communist Party, they abolished one-party oligarchy-military dictatorship. Even the Communist Party valued this highly, and directed that Chiang Kai Shek was to be recognised as the supreme commander, and that a National United Front based on the Kuomintang should be developed. But the Kuomintang did not trust the nation, and did not go beyond a merely formal application of democratic policies. For example, the People's Consultative Conference passed a resolution providing that the popular masses should be made to arise in order to resist Japan, but the National Government would permit it neither to arm the popular masses for the purpose of resisting Japan, nor to set rural government in action, nor to command the armed forces. This was because it feared that to distribute power among the people and to arm them would be to create a source of trouble for the government. Just as with economic activities, the freedom of the individual was restricted by law, in the fine-sounding name of wartime control, to the same fields as before. In due course, «bureaucratic capital» monopolised the economy, the national capitalists disappeared, and the labour unions came to exist in name only.

Chiang Kai Shek raised «The State Above All, The Nation Above All» as the supreme slogan, but his «nation» was not in fact a nation, and meant people of the Han race. Stating, «Restore our unique national virtue, and strengthen our spiritual fortress!», he was putting the name of national virtue on traditional virtue based on Confucianism, and laying emphasis on a unity which centred

on Chinese thought. He made no reference whatever to classes, and when speaking about the state or the nation, instead showed hostility towards any awakening of the peasantry or free association of the proletariat. After he had repeated these views in many announcements, he systematised them in «China's Destiny».

The greater part of the National Government Army was defeated in battle with the Japanese Army, and this was because it had had little cooperation from the popular masses. Li Tsung-jen states, «Mobilisation of the masses was completely unsuccessful. It was cause for the greatest sorrow that everyone should have deserted and not given any cooperation». Yet the responsibility for this lay with the government. Pai Ch'ung-hsi, a leader of the Kwangsi military clique aligned with Li, stated, «There are four stages in mobilising the masses. In the first, the masses are awakened; in the second, the masses are organised; in the third, the masses are trained; and in the fourth, they are employed», and he considered that the fourth stage had already been reached. Yet, to judge from the actual situation in Kwangsi, a *paochia* system such as that of Ch'ing times was being put into practice, ten households forming one *chia* and providing ten conscripts. Thereafter in decimal progression, ten *chia* made up a *ts'un* (village), ten *ts'un* a *hsiang* (country town), ten *hsiang* a *ch'u* (district), and ten *ch'u* a *hsien* (county). The battalion was raised in the *hsiang*, the regiment in the *ch'u*, and the division in the *hsien*, and a total force of two million had thus been scraped together. Under the signboard of «self-defence, self-government and self-sufficiency», conscription and requisition were being practiced, middle schools were turned into officer-training establishments, and the attempt was being made to establish a thoroughgoing system «from the top down». There was no kind of popular movement in Kwangsi Province, and all assembly, discussion, publication and association was prohibited, apart from what was sponsored by the government. As for peasant associations, «the true antifeudal and anti-imperialist peasant movement» was completely crushed, and only government-sponsored unions existed. The peasantry of Kwangsi were for the most part semi-independent farmers, small farmers or farmhands under the absolute power of the landlords, and the condi-



tion of the peasantry was such that no matter how hard they worked they could not get a decent living. With the above-mentioned conscription and requisition on top of all this, it became imperative to take care of soldiers' families. Although family after family became bankrupt, any movement to improve this kind of social system was strictly prohibited by Pai Ch'ung-hsi. For instance, even the tax-reduction which was made so much of in the «three people's principles» was not put into practice at all. The criticism was natural that at that time in Kwangsi, «nothing was being done to consider the interests of the peasant masses, or to arouse their revolutionary consciousness, creativity and positivity». Pai considered that the above-mentioned structure represented the teaching of the Yellow Emperor, and modern revival or the «well-field» (井田) system and official military system of Chou Li. Li, too, indulges in selfpraise to state, «As this is self-government to maintain order in the towns and villages, that is to say, an organisation of democratic government bodies, it is indeed a supreme political concept». Although Li and Pai in particular were responsible for preventing the masses from arising and for stifling the first breath of nationalism and class-struggle they still called this kind of military clique control self-government or democracy.

Under the Nationalist Government, the popular masses had no reason to want to rise against Japan. Wu Fa of Chuangting, Chungshan-hsien (莊丁中山) who on a number of occasions crossed the sea and raided the Japanese airbase on Samkong (三灶) Island, and the battalion commander of the Chaohsien (潮仙) Self-Defence Corps, who with the troops under his command recaptured Non-ao (南) and others, bore potent witness to the latent potential of anti-Japanese ardour. Chang Fa-k'uei issued orders urging guerrilla bands operating in Japanese-occupied territory as follows: «Guerrilla units must protect the people, assist them, and always think of their interests. It is absolutely forbidden to cause the people any trouble. When buying anything, pay the price it is worth; make sure to return what is borrowed. When you camp anywhere, leave only after having tidied up and leaving the place clean. Talks must be held in a peaceful and harmonious atmosphere. When withdrawing, destroy roads and brid-

ges, and move the people out too, so as to create a vacuum zone. If the enemy stops, circle about. If the enemy retreats, set an ambush and watch his lines of communication, seize his transport and cut off the enemy forces' supplies.» The first half proclaims asceticism, while the latter half teaches tactics, but it is quite clear that the contents have been borrowed from the military regulations of the Red Army and Chu Teh's theory of guerrilla warfare. This may be said to be material to show that the guerrilla forces of Kuomintang were lacking in these respects. The fact that the Nationalist Army hardly went in for guerrilla warfare at all is something that is made clear by the documentary records of the Kuomintang.

As soon as the war had begun, P'eng Teh-huai invited the Kuomintang provincial leader to his guerrilla area and held a people's congress, and after having stated that the Kuomintang was applying the «three people's principles» and going deep into the masses, and that he would like the Programme for the War of Resistance and National Reconstruction to be really driven forward, he was overwhelmed with applause from the people. This was an indication that the politics of the Kuomintang had become a mere empty shell, and also showed that the desires of the people were for the advent of nationalism. It was an urgent task to heighten the naive anti-Japanese feelings of the masses into a national consciousness, and then to organise the popular masses into a fighting potential. While the National Government also recognised this, it can be said that the cause of the defeat of the Nationalist forces lay in the fact that it had already made this nothing but an empty shell.

The Nationalist Government was unable to make nationalism a reality because it had no desire to improve the semi-feudal, semi-colonial condition of the country. The countryside of the interior of China under the rule of the Nationalist Government contained 720,000 square kilometres of farm land, but this represented no more than one-quarter of the arable land, three-quarters of the land suitable for farming being barren. As the arable land area had undergone a 10 to 20 per-cent decrease from 1924 to 1939, this tendency may be said to have gradually become more pronounced. It goes without saying that the cause



was to be found in the society and politics which prevented reproduction.

Agriculture was controlled by the landlords. They held in their grasp not only all of the administrative organs from village to county level, but individually or collectively maintained private armies, set up police forces privately, and possessed private prisons. In order to dominate the peasantry by terror, they would kill peasants who displeased them and throw them into rivers, and it was usual for such corpses to be floating by somewhere every day. The landlords were called «local emperors», and the peasants started to tremble at the very mention of that name. Ground-rent averaged 50 per cent of income, and all or part of it was payable in advance. The rise in land-values that came with the war was directly bound up with increases in ground-rents, the 25 tax reduction being only superficial, and these were raised year in and year out. Apart from this, the peasants had to work without reward at such tasks as repairs to the landlord's dwellings, at divination and other ceremonies, and on occasions of travel. There was also the custom of paying tribute to the landlord on festival days in the form of chickens, wine, or other items, and this was obligatory as a token of personal dependency. Even in the case of voluntary agreements, because the social positions of landlord and small farmer were far apart, in actual practice it was only the landlord who had any freedom, and small farmer had only the freedom the landlord wanted him to have. The unfairness of the measures and scales used to assess ground-rents is well-known, and additional levies of around 10 per cent had become the normal thing. The landlord also had the right to cancel unilaterally any agreements with a tenant farmer, and so far as the peasants were concerned, the new farmer would be presented with even harsher terms. It is on record that the landlords «used the peasantry as beasts of burden».

In addition to exercising direct control over the peasantry, the parasitic landlords relied on agents known as «chuangchu» (主) whom they frequently employed to collect ground-rents, and on other matters. In his capacity of local boss, the «chuangchu» was entrusted by the local landlords with the task of pastoral control, and would manage several hundred «chuangk'e» (客) (peasants) for them. Among the «chuangchu» there were some who

held concurrent posts as administrative or military leading officials, such as that of district head or regimental commander, in the district concerned. The «chuangchu» had at their beck and call bonds of roughs who were reviled as «tit'oushe» (local snake-heads) (地頭蛇) and wielding the despotic authority of the village as well as the power of group coercion, lent lustre to the rear bulwark of state authority while building up their local power. Not only did they gather in the levies of ground-rent, but also collected the premiums of usury. One of their favourite procedures was to ruin the free farmer or free small farmer and turn him into a tenant farmer to be enrolled among their «chuangk'e». Shensi Province provides a good example. Here, on the outbreak of war, it is reported that new super-tax, miscellaneous taxes and assessments (semi-private levies); such as self-defence contributions and air contributions, proliferated to as many as 40 different kinds, while other private contributions forcibly exacted in the villages amounted to 10 times the value of the official taxes. With one dose of impositions of this sort it was quite easy to drive the free farmer into the position of tenant.

There were many of the landlords who engaged in the sidelines of trade and usury. There were certain sweet-vendors, for instance, who held a monopoly in the village and at the time of concluding contracts with the peasants for the new harvest would arrange to buy sugar-cane cheaply, or otherwise make use of collaborate coercion to keep prices at their lowest. When making purchases they would use measuring utensils that were from 19 to 20 per cent larger than the correct measure on the pretext that this was to make up for the cost of transportation. The peasantry in general was in the position of not being able to get by without borrowing, but usurious interest was calculated in compound interest at from 3 to 4 per cent per month, so in most cases their land was taken over in mortgage, and they were forced to become farmhands of tenant-farmers.

## II. THE NEW DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION IN GOVERNMENT IN THE BORDER AREAS

At the Fifth Plenary Session of the Central Committee in August 1937, the Chinese Communist Party made it



clear that its master-plan for building a democratic republic based on the Three People's Principles applied not only to wartime, but also to the post-war period. With the start of the Second Collaboration, in accordance with the military and political directives of the National Government, a new impetus was given to the Border-Area governments and the Eighth Route Army. In the Anti-Japanese Military-Political University, large portraits of Chiang Kai Shek, Sun Yat Sen and Lenin were on display. In Yen-an, at a «Mass Congress to Support Chairman Chiang», Mao Tse-tung stated, «Under Chairman Chiang and the directives of the National Government, carry out the War of Resistance to the utmost, supporting the Anti-Japanese National United Front». This meant that the Chinese Communist Party had switched from Soviet governments to democratic governments.

The Border-Areas Government quickly advanced into the rural areas occupied by the Japanese Army, widening the territory under their control, thereby making it imperative to put the policies for the Democratic Republic into concrete shape. At the Sixth Plenum of the Central Committee in 1938, it was decided (1) to accord equal rights and basic freedom to all the people, (2) to encourage popular movements and heighten the positive creativity of the masses, (3) to reduce taxes and interest and raise wages, (4) to maintain upright democratic government, and (5) to foster the mutual cooperation and assistance of all classes and all parties. Judging from the speech delivered by Mao Tse-tung at this conference, «On the New Stage», the decisions of this conference were nothing more than a collection of the proposals made by Mao. Touching on (1), Mao stated his assurance that the freedoms of speech, publication, assembly, association and religious belief guaranteed by the Programme for the War of Resistance and National Reconstruction would be observed on a nationwide scale. Touching on (2), he expressed the principle of establishing the legal standing of popular associations and according them economic assistance, moreover, of respecting their independent standpoints. He stated that to the Save-the-Nation Society, in particular, all the people should belong, positively developing the Anti-Japanese Movement, and advocated that workers, peasants, youths, women, shopkeepers, members

of the liberal professions, the literati and children (without referring to the leadership of the proletariat), should all take part on an equal footing. Respecting (3), he recognised the collective contractual rights of workers and peasants, prohibiting the ill-treatment of artisans and apprentices, and laid emphasis on proceeding in the direction of bourgeois revolution (by way of increased production in agriculture and industry and trade protection). On (5), he declares regarding the Three People's Principles, that nationalism must be understood to mean the independence and liberation of nationalities, the principle of popular rights to mean the democracy and freedom of the nation, and the principle of the people's livelihood to mean making the people's welfare a reality, and declared that the Three People's Principles meant nationalism. Referring to classes, he stated that while there could be no national liberation without liberating the workers and the peasants, and that basically national liberation came first, but stressed that class interests should not run counter to national interests. At a later date, Mao was to consider that these contentions hindered the Socialist Revolution, and they were all omitted from his collected works (1952).

In 1939, Mao assembled his theories on the New Democratic Revolution and came forth with the design that under the leadership of the proletariat there should be formed a united front of all the revolutionary classes, comprising the bourgeoisie, peasants, petty bourgeoisie etc., to carry through a bourgeois revolution against imperialism and against feudalism. Here also, Mao declared that the thoroughgoing implementation of the Three People's Principles was the concrete aim, but as Sun Yat Sen's Three People's Principles did not postulate the leadership of the proletariat, it goes without saying that there has been some straining of logic here. Mao produced many writings in succession in which he spared no effort to make the legally prescribed governments in the border areas a reality. Here too, many problems arose, and there were even times when the border areas themselves were at the very point of dismemberment, but (according to «Economic Questions and Financial Questions»), generally speaking there were steadily fruitful results, and by April 1945 the border areas had brought 100 million



people, 900,000 armed forces and 1,200,000 Party members under their rule (according to «On Coalition Government»).

The Eighth Route Army of Chu Teh and P'eng Teh-huai, of which Chiang Kia Shek had spoken so highly at the outset, had achieved a brilliant battle record. Chu Teh attributes the Eighth Route Army's success in the initial period of the War of Resistance Against Japan to the unity of every party and faction, democratic government, the spontaneous participation in battle by the masses and the display of energy on the part of every group. At the beginning of 1939, P'eng stated, «During the past 18 months of the War of Resistance, one thing that has been fully demonstrated is the importance of the masses. It was the right policy to rely heavily on the masses, to trust the masses, to mobilise the masses, and to organise the masses.» And concerning the peasants, he states that the fact the peasants' associations, with the decrease in taxes and interest, had the power to shake off the oppression of the landlords and of usury, was a boost to productive power, and of great assistance to the families of soldiers and a support to them in time of battle. As for the landlords, he relates that he undertook that if they had not reduced taxes the War of Resistance Against Japan could not have been fought, and that they had become «enlightened», and the National United Front had come into being. Of the workers, he relates how the workers at the Ch'ingching (井) Coalmine set fire to the mine, and highly values the sober manner in which 5,000 T'angshan (唐山) workers acted right up to the time that they stayed their «armed uprising». Of women, he declares, «If the liberation of women cannot be attained, it cannot be said that national liberation has been attained even though we have beaten Japan», and adduces the fact that women were playing their full part in the Anti-Japanese War as regional leaders and village heads (about one-fourth of the village heads being women). As the Eighth Route Army was part of the National Army, statements of both were in common, and there are many resemblances, for example, between the statements of Chang Fa-k'uei and those of Chu and P'eng. But the Eighth Route Army put the United Front into practice, whereas it was in clear

contrast that the Nationalist Army regarded the people with hostility.

In the economy in the border areas, emphasis fell upon its faithful application of the policy of reduction of taxes and interest, the abolition of feudal class relationships and on the organisation of the masses. Benefits derived from the reduction of taxes and interest were the improvement of agriculture, land reclamation, water conservancy, and investment in livestock, etc. The general tendency towards becoming middle farmers, but rich farmers also were encouraged. Farm-hands formed trade unions, and success was attained in raising wages and in replacing unemployed in occupation. It was indeed revolutionary that landlords and farmhands should eat at the same table, for formerly the landlords used to eat fine food on the k'ang while the farmhands ate poor fare sitting apart on the bare ground. Apart from this, cooperatives and joint enterprises, such as factories for destitutes, as well as state-operated factories were also started.

While the villages were based in form on the corporate body as of old, new life had been breathed into this, and it should be borne in mind that democratic villages had come into being. Each nationality formed its villages, or small nationalities of several kinds would join together to form a village. Above the chia (甲) there was the hsiang; at the hsiang, above the chia and centered around the «hsiangyueh», mainly educational activities were regulated. The farmers formed friendly associations known as «ch'ih-ho-huo» (吃合夥) and combined to eradicate crime and vice. Miao-hui (廟會) were formed in the villages, which took care of, needless to say, the village festivals, and undertook public works such as the repair and upkeep of village roads and bridges. For village officials there were impartial people known as the «general manager» (功德主) and the «assistant manager» (經理糾首). Village affairs were all decided by «kungyi» (公議) (public discussion), and the collaborative power was displayed in public notices. The above were all in the form to be seen in the feudal villages of Old China, and they were preserved intact in the border areas. It was amateur of how they operated. Each village made its own regulations as before, but the «villagers' public authority» (公約) now



strictly enforced reduction of taxes and interest encouraged labour, jointly assisted and reformed idlers, improved farming techniques, carried out «people's self-spinning and self-weaving», and, while encouraging the raising of domestic livestock, assisted families without livestock so that they might have the use of animal power for ploughing by means of «pienkung» (a mutual exchange system of animal power and labour), assisted destitute families and assured them of a living, supported the Eighth Route Army, strengthened the training of the village self-defence forces to maintain a wellclothed and amply fed settlement, and arranged the purchase of materials for the army. Some of the regulations relating to the reduction of taxes were, «For all tenant families, the government's tax reduction regulations are to be faithfully observed, and rent is to be paid in the amounts as laid down. It is forbidden to charge rents in excess of what is laid down. Should speculators steal land or seize it back, they should be handed over to office of the Rent-Reduction and Land Protective Committee» (減租保地會議處). In Shensi during the time of the Soviet land reform had been carried out, but it seems that it was necessary to prevent former landlords from seizing back their old holdings. As for the law, there was a people's court and arbitration system in every village, but it is said that the person of the accused was respected, and torture and abuse were prohibited, fair trials being conducted based on evidence. Public bodies took the place of the persons concerned as parties in a case, and prison took the form of a school or a hospital. Elections were held in accordance with the well-known «3.3 system».

It cannot be imagined that policies such as these would be carried out at their face value, and they are probably to be better understood as models to be followed to the best of one's ability. In «Economic Questions and Financial Questions», Mao Tse-tung describes the extreme-left policies of Chinese Communists, the dogmatism of Party member, the inequities of the taxation system, the weakness of institutions (application of the law was particularly lax), and relates that cadres in the border areas were very frequently driven to complain, «We must starve or break up!». In the above-mentioned work of Mao's policies to overcome the problems are set forth in detail,

but the excessive policies in the border areas gave rise to many problems when it came to application of remedies. I should like to throw light on this matter from the annals of Labour Heroes.